

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark
Band Quarters (Building #646, Infantry Post)
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-10

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Parks Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

BAND QUARTERS
(Building #646, Infantry Post)

HABS No. TX-3303-10

Location: On the north side of Infantry Post Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Band Barracks, one of the last completed buildings in the area now referred to as Infantry Post, provided separate quarters for the Fort Sam Houston Band (previously housed in the center Sallyport structure at the east end of the Post). Built in 1893, the band quarters was compatible in materials and scale to others on Post, yet distinctive in its own design. Its presence adds to the comprehensiveness of the late 19th-century building stock at Fort Sam Houston.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1893
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Contractor: Unknown
5. Original Plan and Construction: This structure is a two-and-a-half-story yellow brick building, originally with a dominating pyramidal belvedere above entrance pavilion. A two-tier porch runs along the east and north sides. The hipped roof, originally of standing seam metal, has its ridge running north-south. Based on historical photographs, most windows appear to have had louvred shutters. The building was constructed in 1893 at a cost of \$5,920.
6. Alterations and Additions: The front belvedere has been removed, significantly altering the building's original appearance. The actual date of this alteration was not determined. The original two-over-two sash front second-story

windows have been modified to one-over-one panes with small, fixed transoms above. The original lattice trim below the porch cornice and the belvedere railing have been removed. The roof is now covered with green composition shingles.

A December 1976 fire had the greatest impact on the rear first-floor rooms, concentrated along the west wall.

Fireplaces on the second floor have been closed off and mantels removed. The structure has been vacant since the 1976 fire. Window and door openings are presently boarded up. The building had been used for administrative offices and an office for the Boy Scouts since 1919, prior to the fire.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: While compatible in materials and scale to other existing Infantry Post buildings when built in 1893, the original entrance pavilion and towering belvedere distinguished it architecturally from the surrounding barracks and officers quarters. With the removal of the belvedere, however, the detailed fenestration remains now as its most notable feature. Side windows have gauged brick flat-arched lintels and rock-faced limestone lug sills. The entrance, now boarded, has a brick-detailed arched entryway and flanking arched windows, reminiscent of the Richardsonian Romanesque forms popular at the time.
2. Condition of Fabric: The exterior brick walls and foundations are in good condition. The interior fire in December 1976 on the first floor caused damage along the west side of the structure. The building has been vacant since the fire.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The building is 2-1/2 stories, five bays wide. The main block of the structure is a 45' by 29' rectangle. There is a projecting front stairway pavilion measuring 17'-6" by 12'.

A 10' wide, two-tier porch runs along the east and north sides of the structure.

2. Foundations: The foundations consist of even-coursed limestone ashlar, 2'-6" above grade. There is no basement.
3. Wall Construction, Finish and Color: The walls are buff yellow brick walls finished in all stretcher bond. A projecting single row of brick runs along the top of the limestone foundation walls, forming a water table. Projecting double-row stretcher belt courses run along the sill line, connecting limestone window sills on the first and second stories. A metal molding also runs along the south and west sides, approximately two feet above the flat arch window lintels on the first and second floors.
4. Structural System, Framing: The structural system consists of brick load-bearing walls, 15" thick, in an all stretcher bond. There is a wood frame roof system.
5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies and Bulkheads: The front entrance stoop is four frame steps above grade to the prominent arched central doorway. To the right of the main entrance and set back from the front of the building, a five-step frame stairway leads onto the first level of a two-tier frame porch running along the side (east) and the rear (north) of the building. The porch rests on brick piers and is framed by chamfered rectangular posts spaced 6'-6" apart with carved corner brackets and iron pipe railing, painted black. The porch has frame decking on the first floor along the east side and poured concrete on the north side. The second floor is all frame decking. A frame, open-string porch staircase runs west to east to the second level on the north side.

Open lattice work is along the base of the porch. Early photographs show lattice detail formerly decorated the cornice of the first and second stories of the side and rear porch, and enclosed the open balcony of the third-story belvedere as well.

An open balcony, paved with a gravel and tar surface, and measuring 16'-9" by 20', replaces the original pyramidal-roof covered belvedere at the top of the front stairway pavilion. The balcony is enclosed by a simple open frame railing.

6. Chimneys: Two red brick interior chimneys are approximately 37' back from the front of the building in the east and west walls. The red brick stack on the west side has simple corbelling decoration. The stack on the east side above the roofline has been demolished.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The front doorway is a 6' wide, arched entry with a triple row of headers above. The door(s) has(ve) been removed and the space now boarded.

A small side doorway on the east side of the projecting front pavilion leads to the side porch, and has a slightly projecting gauged brick flat arch lintel above. This entry has also been boarded.

The rear, five-panel double doors on the first and second levels are centered with two-pane transoms and projecting, gauged brick, flat-arch lintels.

A simple doorway (to the attic storage space) off the front balcony has also been boarded.
 - b. Windows: Most windows are two-over-two, double-hung sash windows with gauged-brick, flat-arch lintels and rock-faced lug sills. Marks in brickwork seem to indicate windows originally had shutters.

Two-over-two sash arched windows are on either side of the center arched doorway on the first floor. These have been boarded. A triple row of headers are arched above, springing from brick imposts. A band of one-over-one sash windows with small fixed transoms and gauged brick flat-arched lintels above are on the second story of the front pavilion above the center entryway and flanking windows. (Windows were originally two-over-two windows without transoms.)
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, Covering: The roof is hipped with a front inset gable. The front projecting pavilion originally had a crowning pyramidal-roof belvedere, which has since been

removed. The hipped roof flares slightly on the east and north sides, extending over the two-tier porch. The roof is covered with green composition shingles.

- b. Cornice, Eaves: The cornice along the west side has a wide projection with closely spaced curved end rafter supports. A molded boxed cornice on the porch has an inset gutter along the flared edge.
- c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: A rear gabled dormer facing the north provides venting for the attic.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. First Floor: The center entrance doors lead into a 12' by 17'-6" stairhall with divided winding staircases on the east and west sides to the second floor. A set of double doors leads into the main block. A 25'-7" center hallway, 8' wide, has three rooms to the east and two rooms to the west. A second set of double doors leads into a 29' by 18'-2" open room at the north end.
- b. Second Floor: The divided staircases from the first floor meet at a center landing, two steps below the second floor level. Double doors off the second floor stairhall lead into a large 45' x 29' open room extending to the rear of the building.
- c. Attic: The east side stairway continues up through a hatch door to the original belvedere tower, now a 16'-9" by 20' open gravel deck. A sheltered attic space to the north, 39'-11" by 29', is accessible through a small gable entrance. The space is an unfinished storeroom.

- 2. Stairways: The three foot wide stairways from the first to the second floor are divided, winding flights on the east and west sides of a center hallway meeting at a center landing on the second floor. The east side continues up to the belvedere/attic level. The staircases are set in open wells with beaded wainscotting running along the outside wall, and with turned

balusters along the inside of the open string. Heavy turned newel posts are at the bases of the flights with simpler posts at the curving winder steps. These posts continue down into pendant drops on the first floor ceiling level.

3. Flooring: The stairhall retains 2-1/2" to 3" board flooring with tile flooring on the first and second floors of the main block. The belvedere deck is gravel covered tar paper and the attic storeroom has 5" wide floor boards.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls on the first and second stories are plaster covered lathe. The ceiling on the first floor is beaded tongue-and-groove board. The second floor now has battened plywood sheeting in the main room and tongue-and-groove ceiling in the stairhall. The attic storeroom is unfinished wood.
5. Doors and Doorways: There are five-panel double doors, each with two-light transoms above, off the stairhall on the first and second floors, and also at the north end of the building onto the rear porch.

All other interior doors are single, five-panel doors.

6. Special Decorative Features, Trim and Cabinetwork: The first and second floor staircase wainscotting, door and window trim, and beaded ceiling were originally all varnished wood.

Two fireplaces on the first floor are set diagonally in the southeast and southwest corners of the north end room. Rectangular 1'-8" by 2' openings are surrounded by similar frame mantelpieces. Both have flanking chamfered pilasters and simple carved brackets supporting mantel with a second bracketed shelf approximately 2' above the mantel on both fireplaces. The fireplaces vary only in carving detail of the bracket mantel supports.

On the second floor, projecting chimney breasts remain on the east and west walls of the main open room. Both fireplaces have been blocked in, however. (A detached frame mantelpiece, with rectangular opening and simple detailing, stands off to the side.)

7. Mechanical Equipment:

- a. Heating: The structure is now vacant but the heating was provided by gas stoves and fireplaces.
- b. Lighting: Incandescent lighting was used but most fixtures now have been removed.

D. Site:

- 1. General Setting and Orientation: The structure faces south on the north side of the horseshoe-shaped Infantry Post. The building originally faced an open parade ground which was built on in 1950 with two-story, brick apartment buildings.

The structure is flanked by a brick barracks building to the east, and brick 'Line Officers Quarters' to the west. Smaller service buildings are located in the rear.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

Views of Fort Sam Houston, Record Group 92F-56, Audio-Visual Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

Fort Sam Houston Historical Museum, Building #123, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Real Property Records, Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Buerkle, Ruth C. Infantry Post at Fort Sam Houston, Texas: Location Description, History of Building Recommended for Inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Unpublished report, July, 1974. (Held at San Antonio Conservation Society Library.)

Favor, Richard, Fire Chief, Fort Sam Houston, telephone interview, July, 1980.